

IN THE NEWS

Mission

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AFB, N.C. to Florencia, Colombia, July 28.

Morales, who was born in New York City, moved to Cali, Colombia, in 1986 to be raised by his aunt and uncle.

"New York wasn't the best place to raise a child in the 80's and my mother didn't want to take a chance with me, so she sent me to live with relatives when I was 11," he said. Morales moved back to New York to be with his mother in 1997 and joined the Air Force a short time later.

To his advantage, Morales brought with him an ability to fluently speak Spanish, which he says is his first language.

When the mission to Co-

lombia came up, Morales jumped at the opportunity to go home.

"I've always said that if they ever need a translator for Spanish speaking countries, I'm their man," he said.

Aircraft commander Capt. Chris Carlsen, said he was happy to take advantage of Morales' ability to speak Spanish.

"He was an outstanding member of my crew," Carlsen said. "Without his unique ability and hard work, this mission would have been much more difficult. He helped overcome many obstacles."

One of those obstacles appeared when the forklifts needed to download pallets in Florencia were unavailable for use.

"After a conference, Army officials decided to start downloading the aircraft by hand," Carlsen said. Members of the Colombian Army helped U.S. personnel remove 12 of the 14 pallets, with help from Morales.

"I was able to coordinate directly with the Colombians," Morales said. "Since I speak Spanish, I was able to give them clear and concise directions about what we wanted."

Morales said the trip to Colombia provided the opportunity to help in other ways. He said he felt like he helped bridge a gap between the two countries.

"People have a misconception that all Colombians are bad, when it's mainly just the

guerillas," Morales said.

He said their Colombian counterparts rectified that opinion in the eyes of some by the way they helped download the aircraft and looked after the American military members.

"The Colombian Army was very helpful upon our arrival and during our brief stay there," Morales said. "They cleared the mountains and the surrounding area and stayed alert for any suspicious activities."

Morales

said the mission gave some of his co-workers a new look at his home, beyond that of guerilla warfare and the drug trade.

"Colombia is a troubled country," he said, "but it also has its beauty and there's no reason to be afraid."



Senior Airman Renee Morales

'Spirit of Airborne' to be unveiled in ceremony

A Charleston-based C-17 will be named "The Spirit of Airborne," in recognition of the thousands of men and women who have dedicated themselves to and sacrificed their lives in airborne operations, during a ceremony Aug. 15 beginning at 6 p.m. at Pope AFB, N.C.

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Henry H. Shelton and Gen. Charles T. Robertson, Jr., commander in chief, U.S. Transportation Command, and commander, Air Mobility Command, Scott AFB, Ill., will be guest speakers at the event.

The Commanding General of the XVIIIth Airborne Corps and other dignitaries from Fort Bragg and Pope

will be in attendance, and the All American Chorus and Army band from Fort Bragg's 82nd Airborne Division will perform. A C-17 flown by members of the 315th Airlift Wing will airdrop 36 Fort Bragg paratroopers at the Pope demonstration dropzone during the ceremony.

Other C-17 aircraft have been named in the past to commemorate or honor individuals/events with national and military themes or locales adjacent to C-17 bases or manufacturing plants. AMC proudly flies such aircraft as "The Spirit of Bob Hope," "The Spirit of Berlin," "The Spirit of America's Veterans," and "The Spirit of Charleston."

New dental plan expands services, includes reservists

By Staff Sgt. Kathleen Rhem, USA
American Forces Press Service

DoD's new TRICARE Dental Program will feature lower premiums, expanded services and cost ceilings, and will allow reservists and their families to enroll.

DoD awarded a \$1.8 billion, five-year contract in April to United Concordia Companies Inc. of Camp Hill, Pa., the current TRICARE Family Member Dental Plan administrator. Changes take effect Feb. 1, 2001.

"One of the most significant changes is that reserve component members and their families will be eligible to enroll," said Navy Capt. Lawrence D. McKinley, the TRICARE Management Activity's senior consultant for dentistry.

During the first two years of the contract, premiums for active duty family members will drop from the current levels. The \$8.53 single and \$21.33 family rates will drop to \$7.63 and \$19.08 respectively during the first year, and remain below current levels even during the second year.

Premiums for reservists on extended active duty and their families will mirror those of active duty members, however premiums for families of reservists not on active duty will be somewhat higher. After the first two years, premiums may rise, but "will remain very reasonable," McKinley said.

Other improvements:

■ The enrollment "lock-in" period falls from 24 months to 12. That is, active duty members must have 12 months left on their current term of service to enroll. Reservists must "express intent" to remain in the reserves for at least 12 consecutive

months.

■ United Concordia will take over enrollment responsibilities from the services' personnel offices. McKinley said this should improve customer service by allowing beneficiaries to deal directly with the contractor. Current enrollees will automatically transfer to the new system.

■ The annual maximum for general dentistry increases from \$1,000 to \$1,200, and the lifetime maximum for orthodontic care goes from \$1,200 to \$1,500.

■ General anesthesia and intravenous sedation will be covered.

■ Coverage of diagnostic and preventive services expands.

Most of the changes stem from customer feedback. "We've been listening to the beneficiaries. We've incorporated as many of their suggestions as possible," McKinley said. "We also listened to concerns from line commanders about dental readiness and the quality of life of their people."

He also said DoD officials constantly monitor civilian insurance programs. The new TRICARE plan, he said, "easily matches most insurance programs of Fortune 500 companies and is better than many."

McKinley stressed the program will evolve over the five years of the contract. TMA officials monitor civilian plans to pick up on trends and to look at things worth adopting. "Each option year, we will review what we have, and we will improve as we go along if costs will not be increased," he added.

DoD and United Concordia plan to conduct customer-satisfaction surveys monthly. For more information, beneficiaries can call United Concordia's toll-free customer-service line, 1-800-866-8499.



Ukraine mission

Tech. Sgt. Jim Varhegyi, 1 CTCS

After completing a successful mission, a flight of Charleston-based C-17s prepares to leave Lviv, Ukraine. An international mix of 179 paratroopers from the 82nd Airborne Division, Fort Bragg, N.C., and the Ukraine Department of Air Mobile Troops flew directly from Fort Bragg to the Ukraine and jumped in support of exercise Peace Shield 2000, July 15-18. Peace Shield was a Partnership for Peace exercise involving 22 countries.